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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4709
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0955
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9727
RUEHK/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4205
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1661
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3388
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0402
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6824
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4438
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 0793
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0795
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0476
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2727
RHEHN/NSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0370
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000846

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/21/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: GOB "PERMITS" EIGHT DEPUTY MINISTERS TO RETIRE

REF: RANGOON 650

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Classified By: Poloff Dean Tidwell for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The GOB announced on June 16 the "retirement" of eight deputy ministers and one Supreme Court justice. Five of the retiring deputy ministers were military officers and two were ex-military. The GOB has not announced their replacements yet, but these retirements will create space for other flag-rank military officers to change positions. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On June 16, the GOB announced on national television it had "granted permission" for eight deputy ministers and one Supreme Court justice to retire. This followed the May cabinet reshuffle that divided one ministry and added four Major Generals to cabinet-level posts (reftel). The retirees are: Brigadier General Aung Thein and U Thein Sein of the Ministry of Information; U Myint Thein of the Ministry of Mines; Brigadier General Soe Win Maung of the Ministry of Culture; Brigadier General Than Tun of the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas; Brigadier General Thein Tun of the Ministry of Industry-1; U Pe Than of the Ministry of Transport; Major General Khin Maung Win of the Ministry of Defense; and Supreme Court Justice U Khin Maung Aye. Two were retired military officers now deemed "civilians."

¶3. (U) The only retiree among the eight deputy ministers without a military background was U Myint Thein, a civilian geologist who served as managing director of one of the GOB's three mining enterprises before he became Deputy Minister of Mines. U Pe Than, the Deputy Ministry of Transport, was a retired navy commander who had oversight of port security.

¶4. (C) Brigadier General Aung Thein served over a decade as a Deputy Minister of Information and was formerly a Director of

Psychological Warfare in the Ministry of Defense. As Secretary of the SPDC's Information Committee, he played a

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key role in crafting the regime's propaganda.

¶ 15. (C) The other retired Deputy Minister of Information, U Thein Sein, a former military officer and SPDC member, was another of the regime's veteran propagandists. He authored many pro-regime articles under the pseudonym "Min Ye Kaung Bon." U Thein Sein also assisted the SPDC with the National Convention process and was an active promoter of the SPDC's "Seven-step road map" at Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) meetings around the country. He is expected to retain his position as a member of the USDA's Central Executive Committee.

THE NUMBERS GAME

¶ 16. (C) Recently, the USDA has taken the lead in coercing local communities, particular in rural and ethnic regions to stage mass resignations of former National League for Democracy (NLD) members. The USDA claims it has as many as 22 million members, while regime media regularly highlight individual resignations from the NLD and other opposition parties. USDA General Secretary Htay Oo recently said that the USDA could easily transform into a political party. The USDA reportedly has instructed its cadres to identify five influential USDA members from every township who could serve as future political candidates.

¶ 17. (C) COMMENT: Most of these resignations are no surprise. Deputy minister positions are generally seen as retirement tours for officers leaving their military commands, where real power in Burma lies. Although most of the outgoing officials had already attained the GOB's official retirement age of 60, pressure from military officers whose promotions

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were overdue may have precipitated the timing of these new "resignations." The SPDC is expected to name their replacements soon from the ranks of military officers in line to be kicked upstairs. END COMMENT.

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